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Socialism, Stalinism and National Liberation: Coming to Terms with a Changed World, The Ideas of the URDP (*Vpered* Group) in the Post-War Era

Chris Ford

This article examines the ideas of this largely forgotten group of Ukrainian Marxists in the decade after World War Two. The URDP were unique in being the last such organisation comprising actual citizens of the USSR since the Left Opposition and constituted a distinctive critical Marxist current. Participants in the resurgent Ukrainian movement of the 1940s they provided an analysis which stood apart from the "integral nationalist" and liberal democratic schools. From their analysis of the Soviet system as a form of "state-capitalism" they developed a prognosis of future developments which was remarkably accurate and has been overlooked by transitologists and writers of communist and post-communist studies.

The émigré Ukrainian Revolutionary Democratic Party, which published the paper *Vpered* from 1949 until late 1959, included in its ranks some of the most talented Ukrainian thinkers of the twentieth century. Such figures as Ivan Maistrenko, Vsevolod Holubnychy, Boris Levytsky and Hryhoriy Kostiuk.¹

The *Vpered* group was a unique development from several standpoints. Firstly in some ways they represented the last of the vernacular revolutionary socialist tradition, which was virtually decimated on Ukrainian territory by rival German and Russian regimes.² Secondly it was the last such organisation since the Left

¹ Notable works include Ivan Maistrenko *Borot'bism, Istoriiia Komunistychnoi, Istoriiia Moho*; Vsevolod Holubnychy *Soviet Regional Economics, Industrial Output*; Borys Levytzkyi *Politics and Society*; Hryhory Kostink *Stalinist Rule*.

² In this definition I am excluding the official Ukrainian Communist organisations as part of the socialist movement. The official Communist movement since Stalin's ascendancy and remoulding of the Communist Parties into satellites of Soviet foreign policy had ceased to act as authentic socialist bodies.

Opposition comprising actual citizens, albeit émigrés, of the USSR to be established. As such they were unique within debates of the broader socialist movement then struggling in the maelstrom of the mid-twentieth century to come to terms with the legacy of the Russian Revolution and totalitarian 'communism'.³ Furthermore they were participants in the resurgent Ukrainian movement of the 1940s and provided an analysis of events that stood apart from the 'integral nationalist' and liberal democratic schools of thought. From their understanding of the nature of the Soviet system they developed a prognosis of future developments that was remarkably accurate and has been surprisingly overlooked by transitologists and writers of communist and post-communist studies.⁴

Origins and Development of the Left URDP

The URDP was founded in 1947 in Regensburg, Germany, as an émigré political party dedicated to the building of an independent and democratic Ukrainian state.⁵ Led by Ivan Bahriany it was the largest party of émigrés from the pre-war Ukrainian SSR, though it also contained some former members of Ivan Mitringa's partisans from Western Ukraine.⁶ At the time of the URDP's formation there were about a quarter of a million Ukrainian refugees living in Western Germany and Austria at the time as 'Displaced Persons'.⁷ The politics of the Ukrainian emigration was fractious and complex but could be roughly split into the nationalists, mainly the Organisation of Ukrainian Nationalists (OUN) with two rival bodies of the same name, the largest being OUN(B) of Stepan Bandera, the centrists which included the URDP, national-democrats and moderate socialists. Not to mention the longstanding official Ukrainian Communist organisations, predominantly in Canada.⁸

The main political centre abroad was the State-Centre of the Ukrainian Peoples Republic which acted through the Ukrainian National Council headed by the old leader of the Directory of 1919, Isaak Mazepa. The National Council was supported for a time by both OUN factions of Bandera and Melnyk, the centrist and socialist parties.⁹ They were rivalled in some way by the foreign represen-

³ For an appreciation of the wide-ranging debates of the 'Russian Question', as it was known, see: Djilas; Dunayevskaya; Thomas; Arato; Bettelheim; Burnham; Cannon; Castoriadis; Cliff; Hilferding; Marcuse; Mattick; Shachtman; Trotsky; Zarembka.

⁴ See Chris Ford.

⁵ In 1990 the right URDP changed its name to Ukrainian Democratic Republican Party.

⁶ It is estimated it had 100-120 active members, thus slightly smaller than the Melnyk OUN; other estimates put it at the same size as the Melnyk OUN with 1200-1500 members (Himka).

⁷ St. J. Paprocki.

⁸ On these see Kolasky.

⁹ See 'Ukraine in the Second World War' and Yuri Boshyk.

tatives of the Ukrainian Supreme Liberation Council (UHVR), the embryonic underground government of the insurgency since 1944.¹⁰

A split emerged in the URDP in 1947 between a left and right wing, the left was led by the Party's first president Hryhoriy Kostyuk and included Maistrenko, Holubnychy, Levytsky, Paladiichuk and others. Maistrenko's reasons for splitting were "irreconcilable" opposition in general towards the right URDP as a "bourgeois democratic party".¹¹ The left opposed the "restoration of the old pre-revolutionary order". Maistrenko considered Bahriany simply frightened of the word "socialism" and of losing support in the émigré community. Similarly, whilst admiring the old Social Democrats Mazepa and Panas Fadenko, he felt whilst they called themselves socialists in reality they were not.¹² On the émigré National Council Maistrenko clashed with Fadenko over their slogan "back to 1917, to the UNR" (Ukrainian Peoples Republic).¹³ The new left, some of whom like Maistrenko were activists during 1917, considered such a slogan "after thirty years" did not relate to the changed situation, similarly they differed on the Council over the policy of restoring private property in the economy, as well as including the Banderite OUN on the Council.¹⁴

Essentially the left considered it time for a new party to meet the needs of a new situation in the USSR/Ukraine. In October 1948 they published *Revoliutsiini Demokrat* as a journal of the left URDP and in April 1949 they launched the paper *Vpered: A Ukrainian Review for Workers*, which remained their organ for ten years.¹⁵ It claimed a circulation of three thousand and had circles of supporters in Germany, England, Canada, USA, Australia and Argentina.¹⁶ Whilst the Ukrainian émigré community developed a rather insular characteristic the URDP made every effort to reach outwards. They also counted on assistance from within the Western labour movement, the Independent Labour Party in England, various Trotskyists of the Fourth International, Social Democrats in Germany,

¹⁰ The Ukrainian Supreme Liberation Council (UHVR) was formed toward the end of the Second World War by members of the Ukrainian Insurgent Army and OUN as the political leadership of the national liberation struggle. They hoped to develop a broader base of support for resistance to both the German and the Soviet Russian forces. The UHVR president was K. Osmak, of Kyiv; and the director of the general secretariat, Roman Shukhevych. An External Representation headed by Ivan Hrynokh and Mykola Lebed was established, which engaged in publishing and sought to secure aid to the insurgents.

¹¹ Maistrenko *Istoriya Moho Pokolinnya* 388.

¹² Maistrenko *Istoriya Moho Pokolinnya* 389.

¹³ Maistrenko *Istoriya Moho Pokolinnya* 390.

¹⁴ Though it should be noted this was a view they also took towards associates on the left such as Roman Rosdolsky, who they accused of being unable to adjust to the post-war environment and still seeing things in terms of the 1920s.

¹⁵ *Ukrainska Revoliutsiino-Demokratychna Partiiia*, *Istoriya, Tactyka, Otnoshenye k Dryhym Ukrainskym Partiyam*, K Mezhdunaronomu, Rabochemu Dvyzhenyu, A. Babenko (Ivan Maistrenko, 3 May 1951, unpublished).

¹⁶ *Vpered* 7-8 (1951). The paper was funded by various means including the sale of coffee imported from South America to Canada, then repackaged and sold on the black market in war ravaged Germany.

and especially the “third camp” socialist organisation led by Max Shachtman and Hal Draper, the Independent Socialist League in the USA.¹⁷ In England they cooperated with the Transport and General Workers Union to try to organise Ukrainian workers into trades unions.¹⁸ URDP members, especially Maistrenko and Holubnychy were published widely in socialist and other literature in the late 1940s and 1950s, through which they reached a remarkably wide audience, audiences ignored by other émigré bodies.

Within the émigré community *Vpered* put forward radical socialist positions on the key questions facing Ukraine and sought to challenge the growing dominance of extremely conservative nationalism. Antagonism towards *Vpered* from the right-wing mounted as it consolidated its hold on the Ukrainian émigrés community. During the Cold War years this also involved the aid of Western Governments; with the support of the CIA these elements harassed, blacklisted and had arrested supporters of *Vpered*.¹⁹ Despite this the URDP persevered and despite their own difficulties voiced support for their socialist supporters in the USA around the paper *Labor Action* who were “listed” as “subversive” in those years.²⁰ Finding themselves increasingly marginalised in the emigration, and in financial difficulties, *Vpered* ceased publication in December 1959.²¹ This seems tragic as *Vpered* had survived through a harsh period when the anti-Stalinist left was weak within the labour movement and sympathy towards the USSR as “real existing socialism” existed beyond the ranks of the Communist Parties. This began to weaken decisively after the Hungarian Revolution of 1956. Yet at this turning point *Vpered* ceased publication just at the birth of a new left in the East and West, and a new generation emerged in the Ukrainian Diaspora.

In the time it existed the *Vpered* group produced a wealth of political, economic and literary writings. They engaged in continuous analysis and examination of Ukrainian history as well as Ukraine’s development through the 1940s and 1950s, constituting a critical Marxist school of thought.

This article will examine their analysis of the Ukrainian Question in this period, intimately connected to their understanding of the USSR and East European societies, and their prognosis of possible change in this system.

¹⁷ Maistrenko attended the Congress of the Trotskyist Fourth International in Paris in 1947, where he met Ernest Mandel and others, and participated in the debates. Following this he met the elderly Vynnychenko.

¹⁸ See *Vpered* 2 (May 1949) on work with the TGWU in England. *Vpered* also published in Ukrainian writings by such figures of the time as Hal Draper and Tony Cliff. As well as Trotsky and the writings of Marx and Engels on Russian Imperialism then banned in the USSR.

¹⁹ See “Vsevelod Holubnychy”.

²⁰ This was the paper of the Independent Socialist League in the USA; the successor of the Workers Party, Holubnychy published articles defending them in *Labor Action* in 1952.

²¹ Though they continued to exist as an organisation until 1977 when they handed over to a younger generation of socialists of the diaspora, who published the journals *Dialog* and *Meta*, led by Bohdan Krawchenko.

The URDP and the Ukrainian Insurgency

The socialist movement in the immediate post-war period was a movement of contrasts as it grappled with the changed world. There was an optimism of radical change, whether through social-democratic reformation or an expected re-run of 1919, a resurgence of socialist revolution, in some quarters this took an almost millenarian perspective. For the anti-Stalinist socialists there was an added problem of how to relate to the gains of the official Communist movement. The Red Army occupied half of Europe and was installing Communist regimes; they had taken power in Yugoslavia and were engaged in civil war in Greece not to mention struggles in the colonies. In this respect the URDP differed in that they could relate to an actual revolution in their country *against* totalitarian Communism, headed by the Ukrainian Insurgent Army (UPA). Their efforts to come to an understanding of this movement also fed into their theories of the nature of the USSR itself.²²

In pre-war Soviet Ukraine all vestiges of independent political activity had been destroyed during the Stalinist terror. The only surviving organised existence was on the territory then outside of Russian rule, primarily Polish ruled Western Ukraine. During the period of *Ukrainisation* in Soviet Ukraine the left had enjoyed some influence in Western Ukraine beyond its own ranks. This was reversed by the purges and the famine. The dissident Communist Party of Western Ukraine was closed its leaders purged. The "turn to the right" in the Ukrainian movement accelerated fuelled by the fascist advances in Germany, Spain and Italy. The dominant force which emerged was the Organisation of Ukrainian Nationalists formed in 1929 on an ideology of Dontsovian "integral nationalism" with an authoritarian corporatist programme.²³

In his important study, *The Historical Significance of the Split in the OUN*, Levytsky sought to explain the transformation of this body from narrow nationalism to a mass revolutionary-democratic movement.²⁴ He charted how the OUN developed from being at "first composed exclusively of university and gymnasium students" to draw in "support of the broader lower strata". This was partly explained by the OUN's leadership of the struggle against the Polish occupation, this "uncompromising stand" distinguished the OUN from other

²² The key writings of the *Vpered* group on the Ukrainian national question during the Second World War were by Maistrenko, Holubnychy and Levytsky.

²³ Organisation of Ukrainian Nationalists. The OUN arose from the merger of the Ukrainian Military Organisation and several nationalist youth groups in 1929. It was headed by Yevhen Konovalets. The goal was to achieve a national revolution led by a dictatorship. It blamed the socialists and liberals for the failure of the revolution of 1917-20. After Konovalets's death in 1939, a conference in Rome elected Andrii Melnyk to head OUN. He was challenged by younger activists headed by Stepan Bandera. This situation remained unresolved with two organisations of the same name emerging—the OUN (B), "Banderites", and OUN (M), "Melnykites". Their collaboration with the Germans produced little result when they refused to consent to their proclamation of a government in 1941 and were arrested by the Gestapo. Mykola Lebed assumed control of the organization and in May 1943 transferred his powers to Roman Shukhevych at which time the OUN was already in the process of transformation.

²⁴ Levytsky *Historical Significance*.

legal Ukrainian parties of the time. The changes began when “under the influence of Dontsov’s followers and certain foreign elements unscrupulous attempts were made to harness the OUN to the international fascist movement” in response deep differences and ideological differentiation emerged. The first current was led by the OUN dissident Ivan Mitringa who sought to re-orientate the OUN—“from peasant homesteads towards the modern working class in the cities and villages, from international fascism towards the problems of its own people”.²⁵ The war propelled the pace of change further:

However, within days of the outbreak of the second imperialist war, the OUN’s entire arsenal of ideals proved to be worthless. The OUN was faced with a dilemma: it could either maintain its ideological character, thereby continuing that phenomenon from which it grew (from voluntarism, *the decalogue*, hatred of man by man, a reactionary social, programme, totalitarianism, and as far as including a “fuehrer” organisational structure), in other words to “represent a foreign agency in Ukraine”, or it could by preserving its central postulate—the struggle for national liberation—draw closer to the people, to its native traditions, and, most importantly, to the concrete conditions in which that people lived.²⁶

The wartime conditions enhanced the centrality of OUN with the suppression of all legal parties by successive Soviet and German occupants, as such developments in OUN assumed an increased significance. In 1940 a major split in the OUN took place resulting in the two main tendencies of the war period OUN (M), the Melnyk wing, and OUN (B), the Bandera wing. This was the starting point of the evolution and metamorphosis of the latter into the core of a partisan movement, which by 1943 was fighting Hitler and Stalin for a “classless” independent Ukraine. The URDP sought not only to explain this development in order to solidarise with the struggle but to assert its legitimacy against the émigré OUN (M) and OUN (B) organisations that rejected the radicalisation that had taken place *inside* Ukraine.

Such a transformation in a political movement is most unusual in history, it is a phenomena which has met with responses that can be characterised either of denial, condemnation or explained away as a tactics. The URDP considered this development as a real phenomenon rooted in the specific historical conditions of wartime Ukraine. Levytsky who had been a participant in the process explains it by the fact that:

From the sociological standpoint OUN was not a “normal” social phenomenon. It was a classic example of a transitional formation. In it the old elements had not been removed altogether; nevertheless, from its very beginning it took in people with entirely new principles and values. As a result of very complicated circumstances these new elements increasingly forced out the OUN’s former programme. Unlike the well defined nationalist character of OUN (Melnykite),

²⁵ Levytsky *Historical Significance*.

²⁶ Levytsky *Historical Significance*: the *decalogue* was a ten-point nationalist “catechism” of the OUN which members had to swear allegiance to.

the contradictory ideological nature of the new OUN was one of the most fundamental features of the new organisation.²⁷

He pointed to two underlying causes for this evolution. Firstly the new historical situation, in which all Ukrainians were now under Soviet rule, demanded a new evaluation. At the first Congress of the OUN (B) in 1940 the "left wing-opposition" succeeded in passing democratic policy and programmatic resolutions against the pro-Nazi tendencies then dominant in OUN. Secondly the decline of the "clique" headed by Stepan Bandera who opposed this direction. "The failure of the 'government' of 1941 and its subsequent incarceration in German Concentration camps virtually isolated this clique from all that went on from then on in the OUN."²⁸ Levytsky considered it played no role in any further changes in the movement, he branded the Banderites a "by-product of the historical process, today it is merely an émigré phenomenon without any prospects for the future".²⁹

Amongst the "most significant manifestations of the metamorphosis" was the "Third Extraordinary Congress of the OUN" which took place in August 1943. This unified the existing partisan formations into the Ukrainian Insurgent Army (UPA) which grew to a force of 40,000 combatants by 1944 and established the Ukrainian Supreme Liberation Council, the embryonic revolutionary government.³⁰ The majority at its foundation were not OUN members, and half of them were from northwestern and central Ukraine. According to Levytsky: "Reality and the experience of revolutionary activity, primarily in the eastern regions, pressured the OUN into adopting an entirely new ideological content", the 1943 congress "brought to an end the transitory and confused character of this organisation".³¹ The new polices were "entirely in the interests of the labouring masses, and based upon accepted principles of social ownership of the means of production". They "created a new foundation for another rebirth of revolutionary political thought in the country". In his assessment of OUN (B), Levytsky saw it as performing the role of an "instrument of history" whose previous narrow nationalist politics were "hostile to the ideas of the workers... and alien to Ukrainian democratic traditions".

For the Third Camp

The *Vpered* group considered the movement that arose in wartime Ukraine vindicated their own ideas of the "Third camp", a view encapsulated in the

²⁷ Levytsky *Historical Significance*.

²⁸ Following the German invasion of the USSR OUN (B) attempted to establish an independent Ukraine proclaiming a government on 30 June 1941, with Yaroslav Stetsko as premier. The declaration was initially met with scepticism by much of the population of western Ukraine, who while living under Soviet occupation since September 1939 knew little of Stetsko or Bandera. The OUN believed the Germans would need their assistance against Russia, and whilst elements of the military were inclined to do so, they were overruled by Hitler. The OUN (B) leaders were swiftly suppressed by the new German authorities and Bandera and his associates imprisoned in concentration camps.

²⁹ Levytsky *Historical Significance*.

³⁰ On this movement see: Potichnyj and Shtendera; Mykola Lebed; Petro R. Sodol; *Litopys UPA*.

³¹ Levytsky *Historical Significance*.

slogan of "Neither Washington nor Moscow but International Socialism",³² Holubnychy stating that:

Under the German occupation the prevailing "mood" acquired the form of a "third force" idea—against both Hitler and Stalin. This slogan was the ideology of many guerrilla detachments and bands in the Ukraine and the Caucasus.³³

According to Holubnychy the "Soviet people" could not be judged by the "words they used" as "socialism", "soviet" etc. were "commonly hated but Stalinism itself is considered to be capitalism, the bureaucracy is commonly called 'magnates', 'Soviet bourgeoisie' etc." As a result:

The absolute majority however stands for socialism because the people do not want any return to capitalism, to private property in the means of production, to the restoration of power of the abolished classes, etc. They hate capitalism no less than Stalinism. The common "mood" is to retain the present status in the economy but to transfer it to the control of the workers...³⁴

Holubnychy went to so far as to consider alongside "terror and atrocities" that "the main cause" for disillusionment with the Germans and their "psychological and political defeat" was the "attempt of the Germans to restore Capitalism".³⁵ Of significance he pointed out that during the German advance there was no repeat of the peasant rising of 1917-19 and there was no "general desire to return to small, private agriculture".³⁶ This political consciousness of the population of Soviet Ukraine was a key factor in remoulding the OUN. In 1941 OUN "expeditionary groups" moved into Nazi-occupied Soviet Ukraine; this engagement with the population, in particular the urban working class, impacted upon the national movement. Holubnychy points to the recruitment by UPA of "former Red Army men, Komsomols, even men who were ideologically Communists and in general the youth", at this point:

It became apparent that the mere slogan of national independence was insufficient to raise the people to revolutionary struggle. It was necessary to put forth social slogans, a social programme, to instil a social essence into the national forms of the revolutionary movement.³⁷

³² This slogan was raised by the American paper *Labor Action*, which *Vpered* worked closely with during the post-war era. Indeed they considered it "the only one which clearly understand the problems of the struggle against Stalinist-Russian imperialism and the true will of the Ukrainian people to be free" (Horoshchenko).

³³ "Inside the Soviet Union", interview with Maistrenko and Holubnychy.

³⁴ "Inside the Soviet Union".

³⁵ W. Wilny [Vsevelod Holubnychy].

³⁶ Where it was restored in Kharkiv, Sumy, Poltava, Chernihiv and Voroshilovgrad in Eastern Ukraine Holubnychy argues it was a proven failure, in that it restored the power to former Kulaks—wealthy peasants, who collaborated with the Nazis (W. Wilny).

³⁷ Vs. Felix [Vsevelod Holubnychy] "Russian Ukrainian Underground".

This UPA programme for a Ukrainian state was summarised by Holubnychy as:

1. For state-nationalised and cooperative-social property in industry, finance and trade.
2. For state-national property in land with agriculture to be conducted either collectively or individually, depending on the wishes of the population.
3. A return to capitalism in any instance is a regression.³⁸

This new movement was supported enthusiastically by *Vpered*, and news of its struggle was spread through Western socialist and labour movement publications. According to URDP member Levko Maistrenko these publications were the most supportive of the insurgency at the time,³⁹ the *Vpered* group considered the contemporary press accounts as erroneously portraying UPA as a "rebellion of the Ukrainian nationalists (fascists)".⁴⁰ The radical declarations of UPA were cited favourably in *Vpered* and circulated as widely as possible; UPA fought for a "new just order in Ukraine without any landlords, capitalists or Soviet commissars".

The Soviet order is not a socialist order, since classes of exploited and exploiters exist in it. The workers of the USSR want neither capitalism nor Stalinist pseudo-socialism. They aspire to a truly classless society, to a true popular democracy, to a free life in free and independent states. Today Soviet society, more than any other, is pregnant with social revolution. In the USSR, the social revolution is strengthened by the national revolutions of the oppressed nationalities.⁴¹

Holubnychy was optimistic that the "ripening revolution in the USSR would be social and political" with no "return to capitalism, but the last step to a socialist, classless society, based on popular democracy".⁴² Of particular interest to the URDP were the writings of UPA commanders Osyp-Diakiv Hornovy and Petro Polatava, both members of the UHVR. Hornovy considered that:

In the Bolshevik system, we see a process opposite to the one that occurs under the capitalist system. Concretely, in capitalism it is private wealth that confers power in the state, while in the Bolshevik system, it is political power that opens up access to material wealth and makes it possible to use this wealth freely.⁴³

Once the "parasitic class" in the USSR was removed there would be established a "democratic system in the future Ukrainian state" which would "make it impossible for exploiting classes to form on the basis of political privileges." Hornovy considered that this "social revolution is bolstered by

³⁸ Vs. Felix [Vsevelod Holubnychy] "Russian Ukrainian Underground".

³⁹ Conversation with Levko Maistrenko, 4 March 2006.

⁴⁰ A. Babenko [Ivan Maistrenko] *Bolshevist Bonapartism* 19.

⁴¹ Cited in Vs. Felix [Holubnychy] "Russian Ukrainian Underground".

⁴² Vs. Felix "Russian Ukrainian Underground".

⁴³ Diakiv-Hornovy *Ideia i chyn*, cited in Wilkins. There is an English-language edition of the writings of O. Diakiv-Hornovy (*USSR Unmasked*).

the trend to national revolutions on the part of the oppressed nations of the USSR.’’⁴⁴

Similar radicalism was found in the writings of Poltava, in a letter to the *Voice of America*’s on its broadcasts for the USSR he wrote: ‘‘The Soviet masses hate the Bolshevik ‘socialism.’ But that does not mean that the Soviet people are longing for capitalism, which was destroyed on the territory of the present USSR back in 1917-20.’’⁴⁵ Poltava added: ‘‘We, the participants in the liberation struggle in the Ukraine, who are inside the Soviet Union and have connections with the broad Soviet masses, know only too well that they have no admiration for capitalism – neither the old European kind nor the modern American kind.’’⁴⁶

In 1949-50, URDP engaged in direct discussions with these two UPA leaders regarding their attitudes to socialism and Marxism. They felt that there were contradictions between Poltava and Hornovy, with the latter representing a Marxian school of thought in the OUN. Poltava wrote to *Vpered* in agreement with Hornovy. Among other things, he said that:

It is only on the basic things that we agree with Marx’s critique of capitalism. Thus, we make a positive assessment (although not in its entirety) of the socialist concept (as formulated by the various socialist currents) of building the society that is to replace capitalist society... On these two points—in our view of capitalism and our conception of a classless society—at most we come close to some extent to the socialist theories, including Marxism.⁴⁷

⁴⁴ Hornovy wrote extensively on the battle of ideas with Communism, he challenged its own socialist credentials: A very important place in current Bolshevik ideology is occupied by the thesis about ‘‘the progressive transition to communism.’’ Taking for granted that the first phase of communism, socialism, already has been attained, the Stalinist masters contend that the second phase, a higher phase—that of developed communism—is now being built. In such a society the principle, ‘‘from each according to ability, to each according to his needs’’ will be realised, and there will disappear differences between city and village and between physical and intellectual labour. There can be no transition to communism in the USSR, inasmuch as there is no socialism. So long as there is no social ownership of the means of production, so long as there exists the brutal exploitation of man and so long as the principle of distribution according to labour done is not realised (from each according to ability, to each according to his work), so long can there hardly be any talk of transition to communism’’ (Diakiv-Hornovy *Ideia i chyn*).

⁴⁵ The URDP were the first to get this letter published, Vsevolod Holubnychy informed his comrades in West Europe: ‘‘The State Department’s policy is quite openly anti-Ukrainian. I have quite precise information on the attitudes in this regard. They see the UPA as a bluff that will lead to nothing. They recognize that the UPA exists, but they think that it has no perspectives, that it is very weak, that it does not have the support of the people and in general that its activities are of a semi-bandit character.’’ These opinions expressed by the US government contradict, as we have already seen, the confidential information it got from its intelligence services. ‘‘On the other hand’’, Holubnychy continued, ‘‘they are afraid of the Ukrainian underground. They are treating Poltava’s letter to the *Voice of America* as ultra-secret material and therefore not publishing it anywhere. (But we will ‘help’ them a bit, because in a coming issue of *Labor Action* more significant excerpts from this letter will be published). The ultra-secrecy they are keeping is owing to the anti-capitalist statements it contains’’ (cited in *International Viewpoint*).

⁴⁶ Cited in W. Wilny 80.

⁴⁷ Letter of P. Poltava.

In his letter, Poltava stressed that "We cannot be linked to Marxism because in the most complete sense of the term, we are a national movement, not a class-struggle movement or a class-struggle internationalist movement, as Marxism would require." In his letter, Poltava stressed that the OUN was formed and continued to operate "as a movement struggling against Marxism". The issue arose as what Poltava meant by the "Marxism" against which the nationalist movement was fighting, in his writings, Hornovy stated for OUN members, there was no official philosophy they had to subscribe to, furthermore in his *On the Bolshevik Ideological Front*, he demonstrated that the Stalinists "creative development" of Marxism, represented a break with Marxism, Hornovy said:

It is becoming more and more difficult for the Stalinist masters to manipulate Marxism because it is precisely Marxism which is the theory that constitutes their most dangerous foe, for it is completely at odds with Bolshevik theory and unmasks their policies. Today, Marxism looms up equally as a danger for Bolshevism as once it was for Czarism.⁴⁸

In light of these writings in commentary on Poltava's letter, Maistrenko wrote:

Not knowing Hornovy's personal history, judging only from his writings, we characterised him once in the past as a revolutionary Marxist who had come out of a communist Marxist school. Recently we were more cautious in characterising him. In issue No 3 of *Vpered*, in introducing an article by Hornovy, we wrote: "In Poltava, one gets the impression of a nationalist school of thought, in Hornovy, of a Marxist one." We still think that Hornovy's work *On the Bolshevik Ideological Front* is Marxist. If Hornovy himself thinks otherwise, that does not constitute proof. A character in a play by Moliere also thought that he spoke in poetry, when he spoke in prose. . . . The information that P. Poltava has given us that Hornovy is a veteran OUN activist and does not come out of any Marxist school only confirms our longstanding conviction that in the Ukrainian reality the Marxist scientific arguments are so powerful in the fight against Bolshevism that even a veteran nationalist like Hornovy has to resort to them and educate the young generation of nationalists in the country in these arguments.⁴⁹

Holubnychy was more critical in his appraisal and whilst sharing the belief that Hornovy based himself on Marx he still defined UPA as a "nationalist movement" with a "very leftist—one could even say revolutionary socialist program", writing of the OUN leaders:

They were not Marxists. They did not approach the situation from the standpoint of any complete doctrine. That is probably their greatest weakness, because a revolutionary party or organisation cannot be successful without a scientific doctrine. But in any case, they proceeded in the formulation of their program from the reality of the Soviet Society, from the real "mood" of the people.⁵⁰

⁴⁸ *On the Bolshevik Ideological Front* (Diakiv-Hornovy, cited in Wilkins).

⁴⁹ A. Babenko "Zavvahy do lysta P. Poltavu".

⁵⁰ W. Wilny.

Stalinism as a New Social Order

The main writings of the URDP on the nature of the society that had emerged in Soviet Ukraine and the Communist Bloc were by Maistrenko and Holubnychy. One of their first major publications was Maistrenko's *Bolshevist Bonapartism* in 1948, it was based on an analogous use of the conception of Bonapartism, this was common in the analysis of Communism throughout the *Vpered* group as a whole.⁵¹ Maistrenko compared the Russian Revolution with the French Revolution considering the Bolsheviks had "an amazing likeness to the revolution of the Jacobins". He pointed to the similarity of trends: a left, the right and the centre, both revolutions had seen the destruction by the centre of the left and right factions; however where Robespierre had been destroyed Stalin survived.⁵² Both the Jacobin and the Bolshevik parties he wrote were "revolutionary-creative as long as they represented an ideological and organisational integrity which was the leader of the revolution of the people".⁵³ Maistrenko wrote of the Marx's analysis of the tragedy of the French Revolution "was the fact that although it had already gained complete victory, there was no party to continue the revolution". Similarly the destruction of the leftists and rightists (Trotskyists and Bukharinists) within the Bolshevik party meant noting less than the liquidation of the revolutionary party itself."⁵⁴ Maistrenko felt the Bolsheviks had "more chances than the Jacobins to continue the national revolution, in other words to organise the creative impetus of the masses which was directed towards the construction of a new society". A hope he felt was expressed in Lenin's "Testament" before his death. This was not realised for whilst the "majority of the ranks within the Bolshevik party were leftists (Trotskyists)", the main part of the leadership were not:

These were professional revolutionists who were already tired of the revolution. They had already tasted the sweetness of power and domination. They heartily disliked to risk their positions for the sake of the ephemeral Trotskyist idea of permanent world revolution. Their hidden dreams were expressed by Stalin in his famous conception of the construction of socialism in one country.⁵⁵

Leaning on the majority in the Central Committee, "on the anti-Semitic attitude of the lower layers, and, especially, on the unprincipled apparatus, Stalin organisationally conquered the Trotskyist majority".⁵⁶ After the Left

⁵¹ Babenko's *Bolshevist Bonapartism* was published in both English and Ukrainian editions. In 1948 Holubnychy had also written on the subject in terms of a critical review of James Burnham's book *The Managerial Revolution* in *Revoliutsiyni Demokrat*.

⁵² Babenko *Bolshevist Bonapartism* 3.

⁵³ Babenko *Bolshevist Bonapartism* 3.

⁵⁴ Babenko *Bolshevist Bonapartism* 5.

⁵⁵ Babenko *Bolshevist Bonapartism* 6.

⁵⁶ It is interesting how Maistrenko considers that the Left Opposition had the support of the majority within the Communist Party, as an active communist in Ukraine at the time his views on this can be considered reliable enough.

Opposition the right, led by Bukharin and the “unprincipled Bolshevik dregs, the centre, gained victory”, this resulted in an “absolute separation of the party from the revolution and from the broad masses of the people”.⁵⁷ On the surface the regime appeared to have “took the left ‘Trotskyist’ course” the difference being Trotsky’s policy “sought supporting in the masses” whilst Stalin leaned on the “state and party apparatus” for the terror of collectivisation and rapid industrialisation. Maistrenko contended that what was “introduced by raw force” was not the “victory of ‘socialism’ proclaimed by Stalin”:

Undeniably, something new had gained victory in the country—only it was not of the people, and it was not socialistic. It was a system without private property. Everything was socialised or, more true—nationalised. But the people had no access to these enormous nationalised riches, no possibility to dispose of them.⁵⁸

The “universal pauperisation” had nothing to do with “self-sacrifice for the sake of a higher ideal”, for on the other hand “various parasites and their mistresses” lived in luxury at the top of society. According to the Bolshevik programme “socialism was to mean absolute equality of nationalities”, but Maistrenko asked:

But what kind of equality was this if all nationalities except the Russians, were deprived not only of their national independence, but even those elementary national freedoms which they had achieved during the first years of the revolution; if that layer of the national educated class which stood for liberty, was shot or deported for hard labour; if millions of Ukrainians and also of other nationals were starved to death or transferred to Siberia, and their deserted settlements inhabited by the Russians; if the cult of those Russian Tsarist men was proclaimed, who had become famous for their imperialistic subjugation of other peoples...⁵⁹

Maistrenko asserted Stalin’s policy far from building socialism in one country was the opposite:

No, this was no socialism. This was a social formation, predicted by nobody, for which the worker was part of the machine—more so than in private capitalist society. This was a formation of state-capitalism, led by an anonymous society variable in its composition but inalterable in its essence, called USSR.⁶⁰

Maistrenko looked at how in France the “Thermidorians gave way to the Directory, to Bonaparte; Bonaparte—to the Bourbons”—in contrast in the USSR Stalin “alone takes upon himself the functions of the Thermidorians”, like Napoleon Bonaparte, “Stalin became absolute dictator of the USSR”.⁶¹

⁵⁷ Babenko *Bolshevist Bonapartism* 7.

⁵⁸ Babenko *Bolshevist Bonapartism* 9.

⁵⁹ Babenko *Bolshevist Bonapartism* 9.

⁶⁰ Babenko *Bolshevist Bonapartism* 9.

⁶¹ Babenko *Bolshevist Bonapartism* 11.

In 1937 Maistrenko considered the situation was one of the "extermination of the revolution", the remainder of the old Bolsheviks were removed and "young representatives of the state-capitalist system called upon to enter the government".⁶²

Just as Bonaparte had turned the French Revolution into its opposite with French Imperial expansion so too argued Maistrenko was the "Bolshevist Bonapartism" of Stalin:

Not the spreading of communism is the task of the permanent Bolshevik war as the Stalinist propagandistic columns read, but the introduction of the Russian state-capitalist system into foreign countries. This can be mixed up with socialism and communism only by him who consciously wants to discredit the liberation movement of the working people; but he actually aids imperialistic Russia, recommending her to those who are ignorant of the state of affairs as a socialist country.⁶³

Russia saw revolutions in Europe as desirable only for laying the ground for Russian occupation, just as Napoleon's expansion had removed the remnants of feudalism he was not "supported any more by the French revolution, but by the egotistic French bourgeoisie", similarly Maistrenko considered "the egotistic bureaucracy of the Russian State-Capitalism which in its turn subordinates the countries of Europe now freed from the private-capitalist-system, to the aggressive and imperialistic Russia state."⁶⁴

Maistrenko considered the system of state-capitalism, regardless of its own internal contradictions, "a force with a higher political potential than the old capitalistic world." He warned of the possibility of its further expansion exploiting antagonism with western capitalism, the disillusioned masses he felt had the potential to be used as "fifth column" for Communism. The alternative for "the reconstruction of war damaged Europe" he argued was "democratic socialisation" this would neutralise an expansion of Communism for:

having liquidated the contradictions of private-capitalist society a Europe of democratic socialism would not be encumbered with the state-capitalist order, and the USSR, with regard to such a Europe, would find itself in the position of political defence, not of aggression.⁶⁵

The *Vpered* group characterised the Soviet system which had developed not as any form of socialism, no matter how bad, but its opposite—a system of state capitalism, "the highest and final stage of development of the capitalist system because it brings the concentration of capital and the socialisation of labour to the highest possible point". The URDP opposed the older Ukrainian émigré social-democrats and others who sought to "restore capitalism" in that they saw this

⁶² Babenko *Bolshevist Bonapartism* 10.

⁶³ Babenko *Bolshevist Bonapartism* 13.

⁶⁴ Babenko *Bolshevist Bonapartism* 19.

⁶⁵ Babenko *Bolshevist Bonapartism* 19.

state capitalism "as the highest stage of social and economic development toward socialism (the Stalinist system) is the most progressive system in the world. But it is progressive only as monopoly is progressive compared to small business".⁶⁶

Holubnychy wrote a range of articles which supplemented and extended Maistrenko's analysis, examining the economy, the social classes and the ideology of the regime.⁶⁷ The historic conjuncture pinpointed by Holubnychy was the institution of the First Five Year Plan, resulting in the "destruction of the remains of the former ruling class and the total liquidation of private property in the means of production". "All connection with the past was broken forever. A new society was created."⁶⁸ Looking at how the new ruling class, "the bureaucracy", developed he examined how a "classless society" the initial goal of the revolution "could only be achieved in a deformed manner due to the backwardness of the capitalist development in Russia".⁶⁹ Due to this backwardness the "revolution had had a bureaucratic character" from the beginning, "recognised by its methods (terror, the use of force)."

As a result of these methods, as a result of its general backwardness and its numerical weakness, and particularly as a result of the exhaustion of the preceding few years, the Russian working class was already passive during this stage of development. Thus, when the old social relations had been completely liquidated and only two forces remained in the social arena—the bureaucracy and the working class—it came about the latter was not capable of offering any kind of resistance to the bureaucracy which was intoxicated with success.⁷⁰

Through the phases of the first and second Five Year Plans, collectivisation and industrialisation, Holubnychy asserted this "process has assumed stable and final forms. The bureaucracy has become a new social class".⁷¹ In its social-economic functions, "it exercises control over all means of production", made its "indirect property via the state", it was exploitative in that it "appropriates for itself the larger portion of the surplus value of the labour of society". The initial instability of its personnel due to purges did not change this characterisation of the bureaucracy as a class; the bourgeoisie "also very often changes its personal composition as a result of bankruptcy of individual firms which are vanquished in competition". It did not lose its class character, for this was "determined not by the individuals, but rather by their social function." However, from his post-war vantage point Holubnychy could now see stability

⁶⁶ "Inside the Soviet Union".

⁶⁷ Holubnychy wrote extensively on this subject in an array of publications, not only URDP, but *New International and Labor Action*, USA, *Socialist Leader* and *Socialist Review*, England and *Funken*, West Germany. He wrote under various names: "Vs. Felix", "S. Horoshchenko", "Vsevolod Holub".

⁶⁸ Vs. Felix [Holubnychy] "Stalinism as a New Social Order" (emphasis in the original).

⁶⁹ Vs. Felix "Stalinism".

⁷⁰ Vs. Felix "Stalinism".

⁷¹ Vs. Felix "Stalinism".

in the system, the bureaucracy was entrenched, they had "worked out a whole series of laws which make their privileged status in society hereditary."⁷²

This new class required also a new ideology to underpin its position in society, Holubnychy basing his study on official Communist Party theory showed that in the post-war period, Russian Stalinism had "clearly begun to make changes to its official ideology". Essentially it was now argued Marx and Engels had written in capitalist society, but with the new "Soviet reality" it was necessary for a "break with obsolete ideas".⁷³ Holubnychy charged Stalin as the "chief cook in the kitchen of Marxist falsification", essentially Marxist-Leninism, the official ideology was remoulded to justify the reality of the new class society, they wanted to untie their hands and "without camouflage, to replace the 'old' and 'obsolete' formulas of Marx with the new ones of his, Stalin's own manufacture".⁷⁴ A key element of the new ideology was a "theory of the state", now as opposed to the old state "giving place to the self-governing society, the commune":

the state—this "organ of class coercion"—is presented in the new ideology as the highest value in human society, as the alpha and omega of social life. Having proclaimed the states immortality, Stalinism legalizes its totalitarianism and absolutism.⁷⁵

Holubnychy also examined the regimes so-called "economic laws of socialism", he considered this theory bound up with the theory of the state, "for in practice, economic and the state are closely tied in Russia". The economic laws of socialism of Stalinist ideology summarised as "inequality in payment of labour", the "law of 'socialist (?) accumulation' of capital", Holubnychy saw them as "the same economic laws as exist in monopoly capitalism in the stage of imperialism".

But in Russia, unlike private monopoly capitalism, these laws are not set in motion "by themselves" that is, in consequence of their inner contradictions. In Russia these contradictions exist also, but they are regulated from above by the plan, they are bridled by the unity of economic and the totalitarian state.⁷⁶

Summed up, the "capitalist laws of economic relations (accumulation of capital, law of value, appropriation of surplus value through unequal distribution of the social product, etc), regulated by the state, are therefore the phenomena which characterise the system of state capitalism", however added Holubnychy "this state-capitalism calls itself 'socialism' and is different

⁷² Vs. Felix "Stalinism".

⁷³ *Bolshevik* 4 (1948), cited in Vs. Felix [Holubnychy] "New Elements".

⁷⁴ Vs. Felix "New Elements".

⁷⁵ Vs. Felix "New Elements".

⁷⁶ Vs. Felix "New Elements" (emphasis in the original).

from that analysed by the Marxist teachers in its unprecedented political despotism.”⁷⁷

The state structures of the USSR reflect the interests of this “new social class”, based on painstaking analysis of official data of the social origins of Communist Party members Holubnychy showed that “through the three great purges” its composition changed definitively, “in the direction of de-proletarianisation of the CP”, any further intake was of such a nature that “did not represent any significant danger to the party bureaucracy”.⁷⁸ In a similar analysis of the Communist Party of Ukraine, not only was the CP clearly less popular in Ukraine than Russia, but “the most important jobs were held by Russian bureaucrats” both nationally and in local organisations.⁷⁹

Similarly the Supreme Soviet of the USSR displayed the same characteristics, analysis of its official data showed, “of the social composition of the Stalinist parliament:

the class of 190 million Russian toilers is represented by 182 deputies or 13.9 per cent, and the class of 8 million Stalinist magnates is represented by 1,134 deputies or 86.1 per cent! ... Stalin's Parliament is the class parliament which represent the interests of the upper class of Russian society only.⁸⁰

Furthermore Analysis of the Second chamber, the Soviet of Nationalities revealed the imperial nature of the new order, the main positions in the non-Russian republics being occupied disproportionately by Russians, “just these Russians are deputies to the parliament”, comparable argued Holubnychy to the then French Parliament in colonial Morocco and British South Africa.⁸¹ Maistrenko developed this theme in his work *Stalinism: The Modern Form of Russian Imperialism*; he challenged the theses of the Russian émigrés that “Bolshevism is not a Russian national but an international manifestation”, countering that this was false and harmful “since it tries to whitewash the slave driver in the East, Russian imperialism and to put the blame for its crimes on international communism”.⁸² In fact argued Maistrenko:

The facts are diametrically opposed to this thesis. As long as Bolshevism remained international, ... it allowed the Ukrainians to work for the deepening of their national conscience and even carried through de-Russification of various nationalities. As soon as Bolshevism appealed to the Russian nationalist traditions (cult of Peter I, Suvarov and other leading Russian imperialists) the tradition of Russification became alive again.⁸³

⁷⁷ Vs. Felix “New Elements”. Holubnychy was referring to Engels in his *Anti-Duerhing* and Lenin and Bukharin’s writings as the Marxist teachers.

⁷⁸ Vs. Felix [Holubnychy], “VKP(b)”. An English translation was published, *De-proletarianization*.

⁷⁹ Vs. Feliks [Holubnychy] “Zyizd”.

⁸⁰ Vs. Felix [Holubnychy] “In the Mirror”.

⁸¹ Vs. Felix “In the Mirror” (emphasis in the original).

⁸² A. Bebenko [Maistrenko] “Stalinizm”.

⁸³ Bebenko “Stalinizm”.

The Future of the Soviet Union—*Vpered* Analysis

The social and political transformations in the former-Communist bloc provide a particularly opportune vantage point to consider the historical value of the *Vpered* theoreticians. Like a number of other left-wing critics of the Communist system *Vpered* considered the USSR a “totalitarian state”. However, the *Vpered* conception differs from the totalitarian theory of a number of scholars so popular after 1991. Totalitarian theory in its classical form disavows the possibility of internal mechanisms of change due to the atomisation of the populace; this school is also linear, seeing continuity through Lenin, Stalin, Khrushchev, Brezhnev and the early Gorbachev.⁸⁴ In contrast *Vpered*’s theorists presented Soviet/Ukrainian history dialectically, as one of *discontinuity* as opposed to continuity, “the umbilical cord with October has been cut off forever”. Furthermore they saw the existence of social forces with the potential to bring about change internally, that in “modern times, a personal absolutism in the usual sense is physically impossible” instead there exists a “*social class* behind the dictator”.⁸⁵

Industrialisation had increased the size of the working class considerably, and with “increased exploitation deepens the social gap between the bureaucracy, and permits the class-consciousness of the workers to ripen”.⁸⁶ In response the regime saw the necessity of “disorganisation and fragmentation of the working class” such as the use of Stakhanovites. Nevertheless, even during high Stalinism *Vpered* saw that the class struggle in the USSR continued, though in “deeply concealed forms”. Whilst the rulers were “stronger than the workers” this was a temporary balance of forces, for “history is not working in favour of the regime. This is demonstrated primarily by the deepening and the broadening of the gap between the two classes. Sooner or later the circumstances will arise which will tear the regime apart.”⁸⁷

As to the question of how the regime would be torn apart this was not predetermined, as the situation developed after the war *Vpered* envisioned alternative courses of development including a prognosis which provides a key to understanding the “great puzzle” of the post-Communist transition, the continuity of rule at the top—the nouveau *Nomenklatura*.⁸⁸

⁸⁴ In the West historians such as Martin Malia and Richard Pipes adopt this totalitarian line of argument in their writings. In Russia Dmitry Volkogonov, a former Soviet General and Communist propagandist, turned historian is a good example the problems of this theory, if the regime was all-powerful and “all of us, from the General Secretary Down to the rank and file Communists, were victims”, then totalitarian theory allows admonishment from past roles, legitimising furthermore the transition from old rulers to new ones. Totalitarian theory in seeking to blur the difference between victim and victimiser is derogative with regard to those who made the choice which actually did exist, for example Solzhenitsyn a dissident who Volkogonov spent time attacking him for his exposition of the scale of the gulag, made a different choice.

⁸⁵ S. Horoshchenko [Holubnychy] “Malenkov’s Structural Change”.

⁸⁶ Vs. Felix “Stalinism”.

⁸⁷ Vs. Felix “Stalinism”.

⁸⁸ See Laszlo Andor and Martin Summers; Mike Haynes.

The URDP looked to the possibility of an authentic socialist transformation in Soviet Ukraine, a perspective which they formulated whilst taking account of the nature of the society in which they projected their ideas for radical change, as such a revolution there would be different than that sought by socialists in the West.⁸⁹ "Our revolutionary-democratic movement is not linked to any remnants of the past. Any sort of restoration of the old order on the territories of our home country is alien to our intentions."⁹⁰ The struggle said Maistrenko was "not for the establishment of a proletarian dictatorship but for a classless democracy".⁹¹ However such an internal victory over the bureaucracy was premised on events in the West it could:

only be facilitated if the workers of the West fight consistently for the ideas of socialism. It is a fact that every victory of the West European or American workers is at the same time a defeat for the Stalinist bureaucracy and is aid given by the Western working class to the struggle for freedom of the workers in the USSR.⁹²

There was another prognosis that the *Vpered* theorists developed which has been largely vindicated by recent history.⁹³ In response to the debates in American ruling circles on returning the USSR to private-capitalism, Holubnychy pointed out the flaw in their program:

The domestic forces that would deliberately support such a program are, however, misjudged by the Americans. Or rather, they are looking for them where they are not to be found. The emigrants and the rest of the demolished ruling classes are really too pitifully weak to be of service to them. But there is a force that could be enlisted to support this American program. This force is in the Stalinist bureaucracy itself.⁹⁴

The bureaucracy he argued were the main source of internal support for this program, in the throes of a crisis and an internal struggle the upper echelons of the state could well see a shake up and in response:

When it sees the current system about to collapse, the ruling bureaucracy would be quite willing to maintain its social and political privileges in that way. The restoration of private property would as a matter of fact be greeted with great joy by the bureaucracy, provided that this form of private property assures its continued rule...⁹⁵

⁸⁹ Maistrenko wrote an article posing the question "Is the URDP a Socialist Party?", as it struggled for a different programme in the Communist states than socialists in the capitalist countries.

⁹⁰ From the publishers' Editorial *Nasha Borotba*, A. Babenko, *Bolshevist Bonapartism*.

⁹¹ *Inside the Soviet Union*. Maistrenko originated in the independent Ukrainian Communist Party of 1919-1925, the *Ukapiсты*. They criticised Bolshevik conception of the Dictatorship of the Proletariat as meaning precisely that "dictatorship" as opposed to a pluralist soviet democracy.

⁹² Vs. Felix "Stalinism" (emphasis in the original).

⁹³ Chris Ford "Ukraine's Orange Revolution".

⁹⁴ W. Wilny [Holubnychy] "Future of the Soviet Union".

⁹⁵ W. Wilny.

With regard to future events in the post Stalin period Holubnychy urged "all those who are interested in this development not to judge it by the old schemes which were, or not, good for the Stalinist period of the history of the USSR".⁹⁶ Looking at the post-Stalin "liberalisation" he saw it as "liberalisation for the upper classes, and not for the people. But in the long run such a 'liberalisation' will lead to the awakening of the people too. The trend is in this direction".⁹⁷ This thesis that the new era ahead contained the possibility of "A 'liberal' counter-revolution", which was considered by Holubnychy "inevitable". That is a counter-revolution in the sense of the "restoration" of private-capitalism. The object of such decentralisation by the bureaucracy was to "preserve the existing relations" but it would open up other possibilities.

Amongst those possibilities envisaged was a split in the bureaucracy along national lines that is in the non-Russian republic and the satellites of Eastern Europe. Writing in 1953 Holubnychy predicted that in developing a "new class of magnates" in these countries Moscow was also generating a future challenger to its hegemony, "there is no guarantee that this national bureaucracy will not one day come into conflict the Russian bureaucracy".⁹⁸ With the extension of the Empire's borders there was a threatened "diminution of the specific gravity of the Great-Russian nation within the USSR."⁹⁹ Holubnychy saw the signs of such a possibility as early as 1951, observing that in Ukraine "a schism of discontent with Stalin's policies has penetrated the Stalinist bureaucracy". It was not like the socialist or 'national communist' opposition of the 1920s, this was "a question of discontent inside the bureaucracy itself. It goes along the lines of the question of nationalities and from there goes on to all other questions".¹⁰⁰ This was generated by dissatisfaction with the centralism of Moscow, "which infringes on their power and position in society".¹⁰¹

It was precisely this development that occurred during the revolution of 1989-1991, which resulted in independence. This was realised following a change in direction on the part of the bureaucracy, which began to fracture under pressure from below. The national-democratic opposition accepted a "Grand Bargain", an unspoken deal with a wing of the bureaucracy led by Leonid Kravchuk, which took up the demand for sovereignty.¹⁰² This fraction realised it could only retain power if it controlled the passage from the state-capitalist economy to a privatised "free-market" economy. This is the root of the current complexities culminating in Ukraine's "Orange Revolution" of 2004.¹⁰³

⁹⁶ S. Horoshchenko [Holubnychy] "New Era in Russia".

⁹⁷ Horoshchenko "New Era in Russia".

⁹⁸ W. H. [Holubnychy] "From Vpered, Stalin's Theory".

⁹⁹ W. H. [Holubnychy].

¹⁰⁰ Vs. Felix [Holubnychy] "What's Behind the Purges".

¹⁰¹ Vs. Felix [Holubnychy] "What's Behind the Purges".

¹⁰² Andrew Wilson.

¹⁰³ The bureaucracy had recognised its own weakness and had the imagination and ambition to reorientate itself in order to preserve its class position. On the other hand the national-democratic opposition saw only its own weakness and lacked the ambition or ideas to dislodge the old rulers.

A major factor in the emergence of independence without emancipation was the retrogression in the ideas of the new movement itself. The initial social and democratic content of the People's Movement of Ukraine or *Rukh*, soon withered as more neo-liberal ideas gained hegemony, narrowing its conceptualisation of freedom to one of the "free market".¹⁰⁴ This problem of the role of the market for movements seeking greater freedom and independence was strikingly foreseen by *Vpered* as early as 1952 when they debated the "advantages and disadvantages of planned and free market economy" in relation to a "post-soviet economy".¹⁰⁵

Maistrenko saw a combined role for planning connected to the market in a "propertyless post-Bolshevik society in which the monopoly of the state will vanish and the people will become the master of the means of production". He had doubts in the viability of an economy which was purely planned, as the experience of the Soviet Union had shown "Men do not exist for plans or schemes nor for permanent work-quotas but for the joy of life."¹⁰⁶ He advocated a "free market for labour" believing it would allow everybody the possibility to choose freely his work place".¹⁰⁷ Overall he considered in a post-capitalist economy the "market will wither away slowly".¹⁰⁸

Holubnychy was more critical and against the market posed a planned economy, meaning the "the development of the means of production according to human will", but drew line between planning that "was not directed by the workers but by the bureaucracy and in this fact lies the weakest point of the Soviet economy."¹⁰⁹ Holubnychy saw dangers in unbridled role of the market, even if private property were abolished "surplus value is appropriated and exploitation still takes place.

A market cannot function without gains. On the market one inventive enterprise will always beat the others and workers of the former will exploit the workers of the latter. Such a society would never be propertyless since private property would rest on additional work by the workers. In the struggle for profit on the market one enterprise will fight the other and society will face the same problems as in the capitalist world: monopolies, strikes, unemployment, depression and social tensions.¹¹⁰

¹⁰⁴ The *Rukh* came out for a republic based on "self-management" with "peasants becoming owners of the land, and workers of the industrial enterprises". *Ukraine Today* (January 1990), *First Congress of the Popular Movement*, Yaroslav Koshiw.

¹⁰⁵ *Vpered* 1-2 and 3-4 (1952). It must be acknowledged that they envisaged a socialist economy replacing the state-capitalist system and debated the role of the market within a socialist framework; they nevertheless foresaw dangers of relevance today.

¹⁰⁶ Ivan Maistrenko "Yak malo".

¹⁰⁷ Maistrenko "Rynok".

¹⁰⁸ Maistrenko "Yak malo".

¹⁰⁹ Vs. Felix [Holubnychy] "Plyanova".

¹¹⁰ Vs. Felix [Holubnychy] "Rynok".

Conclusions: Ideas and the Test of Time

The URDP attempted to function in the classical manner of previous émigré revolutionary organisations, seeking to influence developments in Ukraine itself. But with the exception of limited communication with UPA the possibility of relating to events in Soviet Ukraine as émigrés had in Tsarist times was totally denied to them. This restricted their activity to one of a ‘battle of ideas’, maintaining continuity and survival of their vernacular socialist tradition, and developing ideas which came to terms with the reality of modern Ukraine. Despite numerical weakness they managed for a period of time to break out of the self-imposed isolation that was characteristic of the Ukrainian émigré community, which also became identified with a stifling conservatism. The strength and importance of *Vpered* can best be measured in its ideas. To stand the test of time one needs to measure them against the developments of recent years, in particular of post-communist, independent Ukraine.

Vpered considered the Soviet system a class society, a form of state capitalism. This class analysis provides a more coherent explanation of the transition in Eastern Europe; it not only explains the reasons for classes promoting and bringing about change but defines *their interests* in such a development.¹¹¹

The belief of *Vpered* in a socialist reconstruction in the Ukraine whilst containing a degree of optimism was not unrealistic. Certainly until the early 1980s the opposition movements were permeated both at rank and file and intellectual levels with socialist ideas, most common being the conception of ‘workers’ self-management’. There was a definitive change in direction by the mid-1980s. The URDP predicated their vision of a radical transformation on the success of the socialist project in the West overcoming the negative effects on the socialist idea of the legacy and experience of totalitarian Communism. Furthermore, if there was hostility in the populace of Soviet Ukraine in the 1940s and 1950s to the ‘restoration of capitalism’, this certainly changed with generational development.

It is the secondary prognosis contained in the thought of *Vpered* that bears witness to the strength of their ideas. That is of a ‘restoration of capitalism’ through the agency of the ‘new class’ that had developed internal dissatisfaction with its own position and during the transition period remained intact and continued to appropriate for itself the surplus value of the labour of society. Lane has argued that with regard to Ukraine, that the ‘period of transformation has been characterised by winners and losers which have a clear class base’.¹¹² Such an outcome was foreseen by *Vpered* nearly half a century ago.

¹¹¹ See David Lane.

¹¹² Lane.

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